

*from Betty Nichols*

Chapter XIII

EDUCATION

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**CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### History of the Sabetha Public Schools

Taken from the 1914 High School Annual

The pioneers of Sabetha bade farewell to their eastern homes and old-time friends, and betook themselves westward, in response to the call to make Kansas a free state.

Between 1850 and 1855 they came, bringing their friends with them, inspired with the determination:

"To plant the common schools  
On distant prairie swells,  
And give the Sabbath of the wilds,  
The music of her bells."

They built log cabins, and set about making themselves as comfortable as possible, and although times were hard, and the country new, they were made of heroic stuff, and soon began to feel that the hardships were worth while. . . .

John Brown ran his underground railway through this part of the country, and many a home opened its doors to him who was ahead of his time and gave his life for the black man.

Soon the need of school privileges was felt here. In 1860, Miss Rebecca Hawkins, afterward Mrs. C.P. Branigan, taught in the A. Moorehead home on Rock Creek.

Mr. and Mrs. Moorehead have long since gone to the "Better Country," but their children have risen to call them blessed, and the country which claims them, has from time to time, given them the greatest honors within its power. In this pioneer home, began the education of two city mayors, a county treasurer, and a state representative. R. W. Moorehead and his brother, Archibald Moorehead, were mayors. Archibald Moorehead was county treasurer and R. W. Moorehead was state representative.

Later on, as the settlers continued to file in one by one, Mr. Goodpasture, who owned the farm of which the Tarr homestead is a part, gave one room of his home to be used as a schoolroom by the children of the district. It was a subscription school, and was again taught by Miss Rebecca Hawkins. Her certificate was issued by the county superintendent, before whom she took the examination, and there being no

There were never more than twelve pupils in attendance, but one of these was Emmett Miller, who after years was the honored superintendent of the public schools of St. Joseph, Missouri. Thirty-nine years ago, this part of the Goodpasture home still stood, being used as a smokehouse on the Tarr homes. It was the last log structure standing in Sabetha. As the country continued to grow in population, the necessity of a regular school building was felt, and in 1866, after those who had fought in the war had returned, and the country was more prosperous, the site for the first schoolhouse in Sabetha, was selected. Accordingly, the building was placed on the Albany Road, directly across from Isaac Sweetland's home, one and one-half blocks south of the Grand Island Railroad.

This building cost the district \$2,100.00. Lumber was dear, and had to be hauled from White Clay as did the hardware, desks, and necessary equipment. The railroad had not then been built through this part of the country. The erection of this building meant much to the people, as can be better realized when it is known that a man who owned eighty acres of land, a team of horses, and a wagon, paid seven or five dollars taxes.

Miss Mary Perry, afterward Mrs. Wm. R. Constant, was the first teacher in the new school. Mrs. Constant's children have grown up in Sabetha, having from time to time been graduated from the high school and live to bless the memory of their gentle mother. At that time, there were thirty pupils enrolled, the school year was of eight months duration.

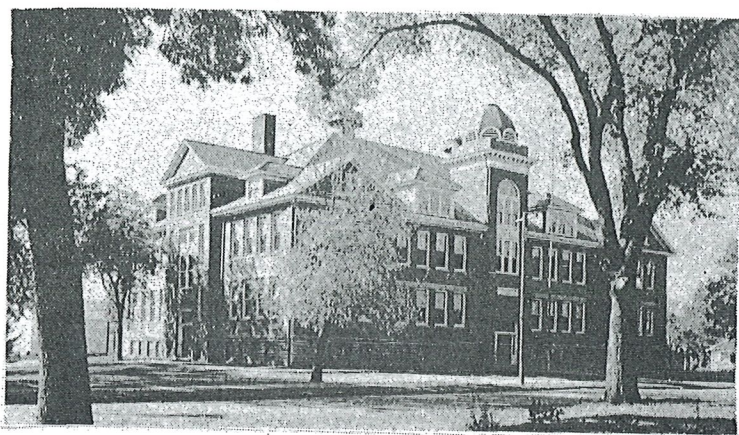
The men who formed the first board of directors were Jas. McClanahan, J. C. Perry, and Wm. Clark.

There followed Miss Perry in direct succession, as teachers: Hattie Rockefeller, Thos. Phillip Abijah Wells, A. J. Wagner, D. L. Anderson, Wm. Churchill, and Susie West.

The writer recalls this school from a picture, which was burned in upon her memory. She was a little visitor, sitting between two aunts of maturer years. Miss Susie West, for these many years, Mr. Martin Rellis, was the teacher. It was a spring afternoon. Two large boys, one Pike Austin, who live on the Storm farm north of town, had broken rules in some way. Miss West brought the offenders forward and proceeded to use the rod in a most forcible manner. As remembered, the boys performed somewhat in the fashion of children jumping the rope, only they jumped the stick. No tears were shed, except those which dropped from the eyes of the trembling little girl, who hid her face, and thought school must be an awful place.

The interior of this building was not unlike the usual old-fashioned country schoolhouse. The ceiling was high, the walls white. Some maps adorned the side walls. The blackboard extended across the front wall, the teacher's desk in front of this, facing the children. There were four rows of high oak desks, about six in a row. They were double desks, and so the room accommodated forty-eight pupils. A large cast-iron stove stood at the rear of the room, and from north and south the light streamed in through three large windows on either side. It was not an unpleasant room.

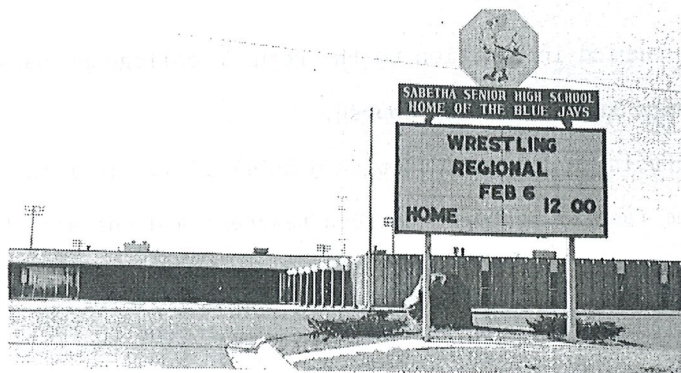
EDUCATION AND CULTURE



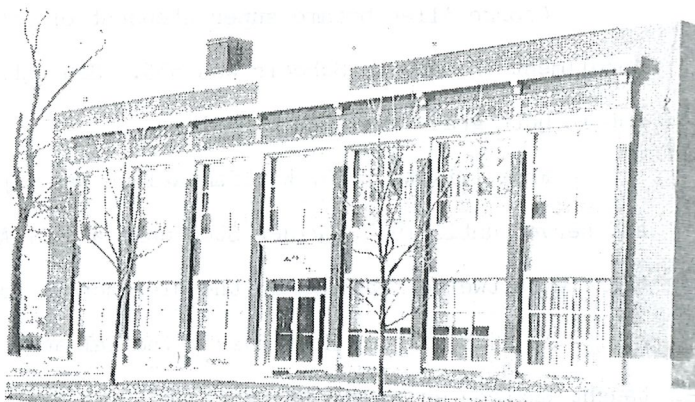
Old High School—Sabetha



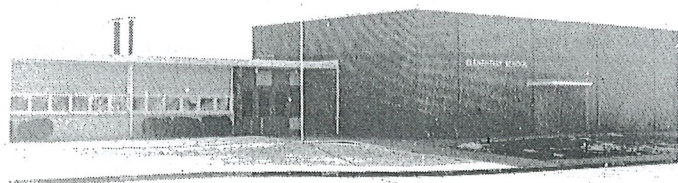
Sabetha School about 1906  
Teacher was Lena Monney



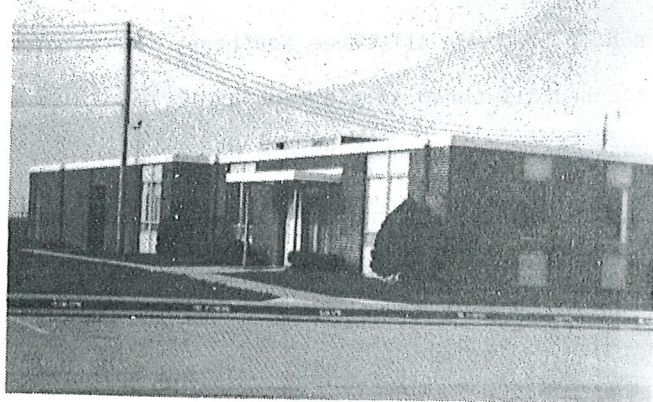
Senior High School—Sabetha



Sabetha Jr. High School



Sabetha Elementary School



State Teachers' Association. Sabetha has certainly the right to be proud that she could have so able a man to help lay the foundation of her school system.

### Sabetha Public Schools During the 1900's

In 1916, according to Tennal's HISTORY OF NEMAHA COUNTY, there were 137 districts in Nemaha County. The County Normal Institutes were first held in Nemaha County in 1877, and each was in session for about twenty days. During these sessions, lectures were given on educational topics.

In 1885, E. H. Chapman was county superintendent and 164 teachers attended institute. These institutes were discontinued as districts were unified. The last county superintendent was Gilbert Jeffrey in 1968.

In 1916, Sabetha as a city of the second class, carried in addition to the regular college preparatory course of study, a normal training, domestic science and commercial course.

George Allen became superintendent of Sabetha Schools in 1912 and continued until 1917. In 1914, enrollment in Sabetha Schools was 565. Students and the faculty numbered sixteen teachers and one assistant in both grade and high schools.

From 1918 to 1920, William Nelson was superintendent. F. C. Marks became superintendent in 1921 and served until 1930. Rider Stockdale and C. A. McKinney were high school principals. At this time, there were twelve teachers on the high school faculty.

In 1928, Victor Hiett was principal and became superintendent in 1931. In 1930, Rhoda Robinson taught English and world history, and Opal Bell (Mrs. Melvin Deaver) taught home economics and biological science. In 1931, Howard Bixby was high school principal.

In 1924, the Sabetha High School was built and is now used as a Junior High School for grades seven through nine. Until this time, both elementary and high schools were in the same building (where Fountain Villa is now located).

The 1926 Annual states that for the first time in the history of athletics, Sabetha was the one school that won all three Northeast Kansas championships in football, basketball, and track. E. L. Lyons coached all three sports. Gerald Summers was a member of the football squad and served as captain of the basketball team. Wilbur Keim was football captain. Sam Jackson, Leroy Ellington, Harold Zimmerman, and Leonard Banks were all on this football team. Leonard Banks (of rural Sabetha) was anchor man on the track team and won three firsts.

In 1923, the Alpha Club, honorary organization in high school, was organized. Twelve semester "A"

grades were required for Class I, eight for Class II and four for Class III. A solid gold pin was awarded for Class I, a gold filled pin for Class II, and a sterling silver pin for Class III. In 1931, there were one hundred and nineteen names listed. The National Honor Society replaced the Alpha Club.

In the 1927 Annual, the school song, "Boosting the Old High School," was first printed.

In 1931, Oren Stoner was perhaps the best backfield man who ever finished Sabetha High School. At the end of the year, he had a total of twelve letters in athletics. James Baldridge, track coach in Sabetha, was a pupil of Stoner at Coffeyville. Chet Havley was the coach, and the team went through the season without a defeat or tie for 33 straight victories. The basketball team were Northeast Kansas Conference winners.

Other Sabetha superintendents included: W. O. Stark, W. R. Whitzel, Albert Unruh, Stanley Beans, and Raymond Shaw.

The elementary school was built in 1958 at a cost of \$356,000, when Stanley Beans was superintendent, and Conrad Johnson was elementary principal. In 1975, there were 390 students enrolled in elementary school. There are eighteen classroom teachers in the six grades besides the kindergarten. Mrs. Jean Johnson is librarian. A music teacher, physical education teacher, and two tutor teachers are employed.

Wayne Linville is Junior High principal, and in 1975, the enrollment was 209 students and about seventeen instructors, many of whom also teach classes in Senior High School.

Irwin Figgs is Senior High Principal, and in 1975, 208 students were enrolled. The faculty consists of about 24 instructors, some serving at Junior High level. The beautiful new Senior High School was completed in 1969 at a cost of \$1,286,000. J. A. Cleavinger came to Sabetha in 1966, after the death of Raymond Shaw, and still serves as superintendent of District 441.

In 1966, Sabetha School District was unified with Morrill, Woodlawn, Goff, and Wetmore schools. Elementary schools were held in each of these towns for a time. Now all students in the District attend Sabetha or Wetmore schools. District 441 has a complete school lunch program with a District Lunch Supervisor. Speech therapy and special education classes are available, also a District School Nurse, and Guidance Counselor for the District.

The Administration Building was built in 1966. The following personnel are in this building: Superintendent, J. A. Cleavinger; Assistant Superintendent and Clerk of the School Board, Von Lauer; Secretary to the Superintendent, Mrs. Marilyn Christine; District Nurse, Mrs. Wanda Bruggeman; District Lunchroom Supervisor, Mrs. Nila Ralston; Director of Title Programs, John Walton; as well as the kindergarten classes are in this building.

A secretary is employed in each school. Twelve women are employed in the lunchrooms in Sabetha, and seven custodians are employed in the three schools. Eleven bus drivers are employed for the Sabetha Attendance Center. The members of the Board of Education in 1975-76 are: William Eisenbise, president;

Don Montgomery, vice-president; Eldon Mulroy, William Hurst, Delores Wenger, Harold Jones, and Glen Stoller.

Wetmore Attendance Center in 1975 had an enrollment of 182 in elementary and 92 in high school. Russell De Viller is principal and fourteen teachers are employed. Also employed are four in the lunch room, three custodians, and six bus drivers.

The total enrollment for the District in 1975 was 1,081 students.

The 1928 Annual contained this dedication:

To the people of Sabetha, living and dead, who realized that in education lies the strength of a democracy and who established the Sabetha High School with all the opportunities for advancement and culture, we affectionately dedicate the 1928 "Bluejay."

In the 1965 Annual, Superintendent Shaw's message states:

The years spent in Sabetha High School have been filled with moments that you will remember and treasure for the rest of your life. You should remember that as you enter the adult world that you will be judged upon the contributions that you make toward improving the world in which we live. You are charged not only with the responsibilities of adulthood but with the obligations to live a useful and fruitful life.

Sabetha has a right to be proud of its schools and its leaders in education.

#### Sabetha Alumni Association

Taken from the 1914 High School Annual

The first commencement exercises ever held in connection with Sabetha High School was at the G.A.R. Hall on June 4, 1886. Lena Monney was valedictorian, and Effie Buck was salutatorian. Charles Haines and Ethel Fountain also appeared on the program.

The first stone building on Main Street, known in early years as the Fountain Building, is associated with various events. It had school interest in that those living on the second floor opened the doors to school gatherings. It was in this home that Miss Fountain entertained all resident graduates in 1886.

It was here, also, that Mr. and Mrs. Roy Hesseltine were "At Home to the Sabetha Teachers" in 1890. Here, too, were taken the first steps toward Alumni organization.

... the Sabetha Alumni and school board were entertained by Mrs. F. E. Graham, or

Alumni of Sabetha Public School held their second annual reunion at Lahr and Neil's Hall, on  
ne 1, 1895.

A permanent organization was effected by the election of permanent officer as follows: President, R. W. Hook; Secretary, C. R. Arries; Treasurer, Margaret Fulton. The chair appointed a standing committee on arrangements consisting of Burton Saylor, Arley Masheter, Misses Myrtle Collins, Mary Whitehead, and Ellen Baker. Committee appointed for securing names of all graduates, viz. R. W. Moorehead, Misses M. J. Jones, and Kittie O'Byrne.

In 1976, the president of the Sabetha Alumni Association is Glen Stoller, who succeeded Mrs. Jennie Finney. George Ackerman is vice-president; Ina McClain, secretary; Donna Tyler, treasurer; and Darrell Schuette, registrar. The directors are Cedric Priest, George Ackerman, Lynn Lukert, and Paul Spring. The secretary, treasurer, and registrar hold offices permanently.

#### Nemaha County Retired Teachers

Nemaha County Retired Teachers met and organized in Sabetha in 1972. Fred Priestley was elected first president, and Mrs. Ruth Freeman, vice-president. When Mr. Priestley moved to Topeka, Mrs. Freeman became president. Mrs. Vera Cooley of Goff was the 1975-76 president; Pauline Rokey was vice-president; Faye Bechtelheimer was secretary; and Mable Grollmes of Seneca was treasurer.

Five meetings are held each year. The December meeting is held each year at the Sabetha Senior High School. Teachers are invited to eat in the lunchroom, attend a lyceum number and a music program. About thirty teachers attend meetings regularly.

Workshops are held each year, also state and national conventions. Dinner meetings are held at Buzz Cafe.

1976-77 officers elected in May are:

President - Mrs. Nola Olberding  
Vice-President - Mrs. Sybil Keck  
Secretary - Bernice Alderfer  
Treasurer - Mrs. Theresa Kehler

